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ABSTRACT

An instrument to measure organizational trust was developed, and a pilot study was conducted to evaluate the instrument and make appropriate revisions. The 23-item Organizational Trust Measure (OTM) was developed based on the perceptions of 42 doctoral students regarding trust and its role in educational leadership. Content analysis procedures and frequency distributions were used to refine the instrument. Overall, 10 of the original items had item means greater than 4.0. Results will be used to modify the instrument for further study. The original instrument is attached. (Contains 20 references.) (SLD)

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The Development of an Instrument to Measure Organizational Trust

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Introduction

Effective leadership begins and ends with trust. Trust is the foundation upon which leaders must build their platform. In order to gain the trust of others, leaders must first risk trusting others and align their actions and words.

Creating a culture based on trust allows leaders to function in a learning organization where communication is free flowing, cooperation and collaboration are the norm, risk taking is expected, and everyone works toward the shared vision.

Trust within educational institutions is not that different from the need for trust evident in other organizations, such as political communities or the corporate world.

Perhaps no other single variable so thoroughly influences group and interpersonal behavior as trust for it involves the belief that an individual's commitment and word are reliable and will be honored in relationships.

The results of a study conducted in 1998 with a cohort of doctoral students in an educational leadership program revealed the following: a leader should have vision and knowledge; a leader should have "guts" to make and implement tough and/or unpopular decisions; a leader should be able to see the big picture; a leader should surround her/himself with a supportive, enthusiastic, and competent staff; a leader should know how and when to delegate tasks and responsibilities; a leader should possess good communication skills (i.e. listening, the ability to write clearly, think logically, and speak coherently); and a leader should be humble, a great motivator, a facilitator, and a coach. These findings served as the basis for the development of the OTM.

Objective

The purpose of this study was to develop an instrument to measure organizational trust (page 6), and to conduct a pilot study with the instrument. The Organizational Trust Measurement will be revised based upon the results of the item analysis.

Literature Review

What is trust? Trust is the cement that binds together all relationships and provides the foundation from which society operates, leadership flourishes, and changes occur (Glazer, 1997). In order to influence someone or be influenced there must be a sense of trust by both parties. "Trust is the heart of fostering collaboration. It's the central issue in human relationships within and outside the organization." (Kouzes & Posner, 1995, p. 163)

However, Ruscio (1997) believes America is becoming a nation of suspicious strangers, and this mistrust of each other is a major reason we have lost confidence in the federal government and other major national institutions. This mistrust, say Kouzes and Posner (1995) is highly contagious and can spread throughout the group.

According to Kouzes and Posner (1995), trust has been identified as the most important characteristic of leadership and it is one of the key components in relationships among leaders and followers. Their research has found that followers want leaders to be truthful, ethical, and to have principles.

Zand (1997) found that managers who established high trust relationships showed more cooperation with one another and less tension. They demonstrated more innovation in finding new solutions when presented with company challenges and more willingness to take risks. Those with low trust were guarded, competitive, non-participatory, unsharing, and resistant to change. The insecurity generated by the lack of trust increased rigidity and unwillingness to accept new ideas beyond the conventional rules or company policies.

When leadership trusted the followers, the relationship was more equitable, democratic, and receptive to innovation arising from the followers. Often this meant that followers felt more empowered to affect changes in the organization's policies within a climate which was positive, supportive, cohesive, and harmonious. In contrast, when leaders did not trust followers they were often over-managed, overly vigilant, and controlling. This created an atmosphere that was negative, discordant, doubtful, and more fragmented. Internal competition and lack of cooperative spirit can also characterize the organization's culture.

Finally, Cannon (1993) identifies trust as an essential ethical principal which involves higher education leaders keeping promises, telling the truth, maintaining respect, and being loyal to their followers.

Method/Data Sources

The 23-item Organizational Trust Measure (OTM) was developed based on the perceptions of doctoral students regarding trust and its role in educational leadership (a paper presented at the 1999 Annual Meeting of the American Education Research Association) and a review of the literature. A five-point Likert type scale was used to measure levels of agreement.

The sample for this study consisted of elementary, middle school, high school, and university teachers and administrators from two northeastern states. The OTM was administered during the summer and fall of 1999 to three groups. The sample for this study consisted of 42 respondents who were in a Masters of Education Program in a college in New England. Some of the people that participated have certification and others were presently seeking certification. The age range was from 30 to 50 years of age. All respondents except for five were female. The participants were enrolled in a program that follows a cohort model. The program which is meta-cognitively and reflective practice oriented takes two years to complete. Students are required to produce a final Masters Project that is action-research oriented. It is presented both in writing and orally to the faculty and their cohort and family.

Data Analysis

The results of this study were analyzed using content analysis procedures and frequency distributions (pages 7-10). Based on item means, the items were rank ordered. Overall, ten items (3-11, and 21) had a mean greater than 4.00. A thorough discussion of the results will be provided as well as suggestions for future research.

Educational Importance

Research has identified trust as a significant factor that binds leaders and followers together. Effective leadership can lead to meeting goals and objectives, a productive work environment, and effectively implementing change within an organization. Trust is not only a major element in enabling others to act, but also in accepting influence.

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ORGANIZATIONAL TRUST MEASURE

Please answer each question with the appropriate number from the following key:

5-Strongly Agree
4-Agree
3-Neutral
2-Disagree
1-Strongly Disagree

1. Trust in educational institutions is not different from trust in other organizations.
2. Trust is the foundation from which society operates.
3. Trust is the core in human relationships.
4. Trust fosters cooperation.
5. A lack of trust increases rigidity.
6. Trust creates a positive climate.
7. Trust involves keeping promises.
8. Trust has to be earned.
9. Trust creates a supportive atmosphere.
10. Trust is achieved through actions.
11. Trust enables other to act.
12. To earn trust, a leader must have vision.
13. To earn trust, a leader must be able to make unpopular decisions.
14. To earn trust, a leader must be empathic.
15. To earn trust, a leader must possess good communication skills.
16. To earn trust, a leader must be a facilitator.
17. To earn trust, a leader must be able to see the big picture.
18. To earn trust, a leader must surround him/herself with a competent staff.
19. To earn trust, a leader must be humble.
20. To earn trust, a leader must be a motivator.
21. To earn trust, a leader must be able to implement tough decisions.
22. To earn trust, a leader must be sympathetic.
23. To earn trust, a leader must delegate tasks.

Summary Table For Total Sample

	5	4	3	2	1	N	Mean	Rank
1	7	12	4	13	6	42	3.02	
2	13	17	6	5	0	41	3.93	
3	27	13	1	1	0	42	4.57	2
4	23	18	1	0	0	42	4.52	3
5	19	15	5	2	1	42	4.17	6
6	27	12	1	1	0	41	4.59	1
7	23	17	2	0	0	42	4.50	4
8	21	12	3	4	2	42	4.10	8
9	25	16	1	0	0	42	4.57	2
10	21	16	5	0	0	42	4.38	5
11	13	22	7	0	0	42	4.14	7
12	3	17	18	3	1	42	3.43	
13	7	20	11	3	1	42	3.69	
14	10	20	7	4	1	42	3.81	
15	11	19	7	4	1	42	3.83	
16	7	19	10	5	1	42	3.62	
17	10	20	8	3	1	42	3.83	
18	6	19	10	7	0	42	3.57	
19	7	15	13	5	1	41	3.54	
20	10	20	8	3	1	42	3.83	
21	17	15	6	4	0	42	4.07	9
22	9	20	11	1	1	42	3.83	
23	10	13	13	4	2	42	3.59	

	5	4	3	2	1	N	Mean	Rank
1	3	0	2	2	0	7	3.57	
2	2	3	1	0	0	7	3.57	
3	4	3	0	0	0	7	4.57	2
4	3	4	0	0	0	7	4.43	3
5	4	3	0	0	0	7	4.57	2
6	5	2	0	0	0	7	4.71	1
7	5	2	0	0	0	7	4.71	1
8	2	2	0	2	1	7	3.29	
9	4	3	0	0	0	7	4.57	2
10	2	4	1	0	0	7	4.14	4
11	1	5	1	0	0	7	3.71	
12	0	2	3	1	1	7	2.86	
13	1	5	0	1	0	7	3.86	5
14	0	3	0	3	1	7	2.71	
15	1	2	1	2	1	7	3.00	
16	1	2	1	2	1	7	3.00	
17	1	3	1	1	1	7	3.43	
18	0	5	1	1	0	7	3.57	
19	0	2	2	2	1	7	2.71	
20	0	2	2	2	1	7	2.71	
21	2	3	0	2	0	7	3.71	6
22	0	3	2	1	1	7	3.00	
23	1	0	3	2	1	7	2.71	

	5	4	3	2	1	N	Mean	Rank
1	1	4	2	6	3	16	2.63	
2	4	9	2	1	0	16	4.00	
3	11	5	0	0	0	16	4.69	1
4	9	6	1	0	0	16	4.50	4
5	7	8	1		0	16	4.38	6
6	11	4	1	0	0	16	4.63	2
7	10	5	1	0	0	16	4.56	3
8	8	6	1	0	1	16	3.75	
9	8	7	1	0	0	16	4.44	5
10	8	6	2	0	0	16	4.38	6
11	5	8	3	0	0	16	4.13	7
12	3	6	6	1	0	16	3.69	
13	3	6	6	0	1	16	3.63	
14	5	8	2	1	0	16	4.06	
15	3	9	3	1	0	16	3.88	
16	3	7	5	1	0	16	3.75	
17	5	7	4	0	0	16	4.06	
18	2	7	5	2	0	16	3.56	
19	2	7	6	1	0	16	3.63	
20	4	9	3	0	0	16	4.06	
21	6	6	4	0	0	16	4.13	7
22	5	7	4	0	0	16	4.06	
23	4	7	5	0	0	16	3.94	

	5	4	3	2	1	N	Mean	Rank
1	3	8	0	5	3	19	3.21	
2	7	5	3	4	0	19	3.79	
3	12	5	1	1	0	19	4.47	3
4	11	8	0	0	0	19	4.58	2
5	8	4	4	2	1	19	3.84	
6	12	6	0	1	0	19	4.58	2
7	10	1	0	0	0	19	4.37	4
8	11	4	2	2	0	19	4.26	5
9	13	6	0	0	0	19	4.68	1
10	11	6	2	0	0	19	4.47	3
11	7	9	3	0	0	19	4.21	6
12	0	9	9	1	0	19	3.42	
13	3	9	5	2	0	19	3.68	
14	5	9	5	0	0	19	4.00	
15	7	8	3	1	0	19	4.11	8
16	3	10	4	2	0	19	3.74	
17	4	10	3	2	0	19	3.84	
18	4	7	4	4	0	19	3.58	
19	5	6	5	2	0	18	3.58	
20	6	9	3	1	0	19	4.05	
21	9	6	2	2	0	19	4.16	7
22	4	10	5	0	0	19	3.95	
23	5	6	5	2	1	19	3.63	